



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

FEB 13 2019

F-2019-01471

Emma Best
C/O MuckRock News
DEPT MR 63906
411A Highland Ave
Somerville, MA 02144-2516

Dear Ms. Best:

This letter is to acknowledge receipt of your November 19, 2018 request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, to the Department of State, in which you requested for various types of records that mention the Syrian Electronic Army.

The Office of Information Programs and Services (IPS) received your FOIA request on November 19, 2018 and assigned it the tracking number at the top of this letter. Please include the tracking number in all future communications concerning this FOIA request. We have classified you as a representative of the news media.

You have requested that the Department waive the fees for processing your request. Our FOIA regulations state that the Department may waive fees if it determines, in its discretion, the “disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” Our FOIA regulations also provide four specific criteria that are used to determine whether this standard is met. *See* 22 CFR 171.16. Your request does meet this standard; therefore, your request for a fee waiver has been granted.

The records you seek require the need to search in offices that are separate from the office processing your request. Accordingly, your request falls within “unusual circumstances” as defined in the FOIA. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(B)(i)-(iii). Because of these unusual circumstances, we need to extend the time limit to respond to your request beyond the ten additional days provided by the statute.

The time needed to complete our work on your request will necessarily depend on a variety of factors including the number of locations that must be searched, the complexity of the search, the volume and complexity of any material located, and consultations with other U.S. Government

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agencies whose information is included in the material located. The time needed will also depend on the number of other requests ahead of it in the relevant processing track.

This Office assigns incoming requests to one of three tracks: simple, complex, or expedited. Each request is then handled on a first-in, first-out basis in relation to other requests in the same track. Your request has been assigned to the complex track and will be handled as quickly as possible.

In an effort to speed the processing of your request, you may wish to narrow the scope of your request. Among the ways you can do so is by narrowing the date range of requested records, reducing the number of topics requested, excluding certain types of records (such as e-mails and/or paper records) from the request, identifying the particular office/bureau from which you are seeking records, and limiting the number of potentially responsive records you seek. You can also agree to an alternative time frame for processing, should records be located, or you may wish to await the completion of our records search to discuss either of these options.

I regret the necessity of this delay, but I assure you that your request will be processed as soon as possible. If you wish to discuss narrowing of your request or an alternative time frame for the processing of your request, or if you have any questions regarding the status of your request, you may contact our FOIA Requester Service Center or our FOIA Public Liaison via email at FOIAstatus@state.gov or telephone at (202) 261-8484.

Lastly, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, email address: ogis@nara.gov; telephone: (202) 741-5770; toll free number: 1-877-684-6448; facsimile: (202) 741-5769.

Sincerely,



Angela M. Averette, Acting Chief
Requester Communications Branch
Requester Liaison Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

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